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SUBJECT ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS

BROADCAST EXCERPT

MICHELE MARSH (ANCHOR): Every time you microwave a meal, blow dry your hair, or walk under a power line, you're putting yourself at risk. The problem comes from electromagnetic fields.

ERNIE ANASTOS (ANCHOR): Well, tonight, Arnold Diaz joins us with a special investigative report on these magnetic fields and the danger that they pose. Arnie.

ARNOLD DIAZ (REPORTER): Right, Ernie. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that there may be a link between cancer and exposure to electromagnetic fields, but there's not enough known about what type of exposure might be the most dangerous.

You can't see them, hear them, or smell them, but they're in the air, surrounding these power lines. They come out of your computer terminal, television set, hair dryer, emanate from microwave ovens and electric stoves. They are electromagnetic fields, EMFs. They can be measured and in areas where they are high, they can be dramatically powerful.

I'm standing underneath some power lines that are actually in the backyard of some homes. Notice when we turn the camera light off, the fluorescent tubes are being lit up by the electromagnetic fields from the power lines high above my head. Just as the tubes absorb the EMFs, so do our bodies and there's mounting evidence EMFs could pose some serious health risks.

DR. LOUIS SLESIN (MICROWAVE NEWS): What we do know is that there's a high probability that electromagnetic fields promote the growth of cancer and increases the risk of cancer.

DIAZ: A recent Swedish study found that children living near high voltage wires exposed to long-term levels of three milligaus

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had four times the normal incidence of leukemia. Even a relatively low level of one milligaus doubled the childhood leukemia rate. What does that mean for the many people who live near power lines in our area? Well, many scientists say there's no reason to panic.

JOHN WILSON (CON ED): Overall, the body of evidence that we have has raised the hypothesis that magnetic fields might be related to health effects, but there is no level that's been conclusively determined as being unsafe, whether it's one milligaus, two milligaus, or even 1000 milligaus.

DIAZ: If the Swedish study is right and long-term exposure to only two or three milligaus can cause childhood leukemia, then New Yorkers are in trouble because you get higher readings than that on almost any street in this city. Underground power lines are responsible for a reading of almost ten milligaus in front of this restaurant. Our gaus meter read 25 outside these brownstones. And on a typical corner where traffic signals and streetlight cables are buried, our meter peaked at over 100 milligaus. And if two milligaus increased the risk of childhood leukemia in Sweden, what about schoolkids here?

WILSON: You're going to find higher levels than two milligaus in every school in New York City, regardless of if you're near a power line or not, because we have wires in the walls, appliances, and what not, everything producing magnetic fields.

DIAZ: Were two cases of childhood leukemia at Manhattan's Town School caused by readings of ten milligaus found in one classroom? We'll never know, but surprisingly, the source of the high reading was not the Con Ed substation next to the school. It was the neighboring apartment house whose power lines ran underneath the classroom. The school has now put metal shields around the lines and children no longer use that classroom. Some scientists are urging that EMF readings be taken at all schools.

DR. SLESIN: I think that we should also be moving to protect children the same way the Swedes are doing. The most important thing is we have some time. Let's take it seriously. Let's admit we have a problem and let's try to correct it.

WILSON: If we ever have to do something in this city, it's going to have major ramifications on society. That is, we would have to redesign all the buildings as well as the entire transmission and distribution system, something that's really not feasible.

DIAZ: There are lots of things we can all do now. In part two, we'll give you some simple tips on how to limit your exposure to EMFs in your home and workplace.

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Some common electrical appliances and equipment found in most homes produce extremely high EMF levels, but there are proven methods of reducing your exposure and you'll see those tomorrow night.

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